

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 HA-05 AF-10 IO-13 EB-08 CA-01
TRSE-00 /110 W
-----025290 282139Z /66

P R 281652Z DEC 77
FM USINT HAVANA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 817
INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 HAVANA 0945

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDIP MILI ETRD XJ US CU
SUBJECT: CASTRO HITS OUT AT RECENT US STATEMENTS

REF: HAVANA 937

1. SUMMARY: FIDEL CASTRO'S DECEMBER 24 SPEECH REPRESENTED HIGHLY EMOTIONAL AND NEGATIVE RESPONSE TO RECENT US ADMINISTRATION AND CONGRESSIONAL STATEMENTS ON CUBAN POLICY IN AFRICA AND CUBAN-NATIONALITY POLITICAL PRISONERS. CASTRO STOPS SHORT OF WRITING OFF NORMALIZATION PROCESS, AND MAY IN FACT HOPE TO REDIRECT IT, BUT HIS INNUENDOS DIRECTED FOR FIRST TIME AT PRESIDENT CARTER AS WELL AS DEFIANT CASTRO STANDS ON AFRICA, PUERTO RICO, AND CUBAN NATIONALITY POLITICAL PRISONERS, REPRESENT TOUGHENING IN TONE, IF NOT CONTENT, OF CUBAN POSTURE. THEY APPEAR INTENDED TO DEMARCAT E RANGE OF IMPORTANT POLITICAL ISSUES ON WHICH US SHOULD EXPECT NO CUBAN CONCESSIONS. CASTRO APPARENTLY WISHES TO WARN US AWAY FROM THESE ISSUES AND TO ENCOURAGE EARLY US EMBARGO LIFTING AS MEANS TO SECURE CUBAN GESTURE IN OTHER LESS SENSITIVE AREAS (E.G., RELEASE OF AMCIT POLITICAL PRISONERS). CASTRO SPEECH CERTAINLY ALSO INTENDED FOR NON-US AUDIENCE - TO LIMIT CUBAN PUBLIC EXPECTATIONS OF PROSPECTS FOR AND FRUITS OF NORMALIZATION EFFORTS WITH US, TO REAFFIRM HAVANA'S LOYALTY TO MOSCOW AT TIME OF IMPORTANT ECONOMIC NEGOTIATIONS,
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AND TO SEEK TO EXPLOIT DOMESTIC NATIONALIST SENTIMENT TO DISTRACT ATTENTION FROM SORRY ECONOMIC PLIGHT FACING CUBA. ACERBITY OF CASTRO'S REMARKS MAY REFLECT CUBAN LEADER'S SELF-AROUSED RHETORICAL PASSION AS WELL AS POLICY CONSIDERATIONS. END SUMMARY

2. CASTRO'S DECEMBER 24 PODER POPULAR SPEECH OUTLINING MEDIUM-TERM BASIC CUBAN ECONOMIC STRATEGY AND POLICY TOWARD US HAS BEEN HANDLED

HERE AS MAJOR POLICY PRONOUNCEMENT. SPEECH HAS BEEN REBROADCAST THREE TIMES ON RADIO AND TV. (YET, IN TELEVISION REBROADCAST, VIDEO PORTION OF CASTRO DIATRIBE AGAINST US WAS REPLACED BY FILM CLIPS SHOWING BAY OF PIGS AND OTHER HISTORICAL SCENES. THIS MAY REFLECT SOME EMBARRASSMENT AT RHETORICAL FEVER TO WHICH CUBAN LEADER ROUSED HIMSELF. FYI CASTRO ORDINARILY SPEAKS ONLY WITH TALKING POINTS, NOT PREPARED TEXT. END FYI)

3. ESSENCE OF CASTRO'S POSITION IS THAT THERE ARE A NUMBER OF ISSUES ON WHICH HE WILL NOT COMPROMISE WITH US, AND THAT MAINTENANCE OF US EMBARGO AND USE OF EMBARGO REMOVAL ISSUE AS NEGOTIATING ARM REPRESENT "IMMORAL" FORM OF PRESSURE WHICH HE (CASTRO) WILL NOT ABIDE. CUBAN LEADER, WHILE ALLOWING THAT EMBARGO REMOVAL WOULD BE USEFUL, FLAUNTS HIS PUTATIVE FREEDOM OF ACTION BY REJECTING ANY NOTION THAT CUBA "NEEDS" REMOVAL OF ECONOMIC EMBARGO. ONLY THE SOVIET CONNECTION REPRESENTS ECONOMIC NECESSITY FOR CUBA, AND IS IMMUTABLE, CASTRO SAYS. WASHINGTON SHOULD HARBOR NO HOPES FOR CUBAN REALIGNMENT.

4. ON AFRICA, CASTRO STATES THAT US CAN OFFER NO CONCESSION THAT WOULD MAKE CUBA NEGOTIATE ITS POLICY. ONLY OVERSEAS MILITARY MATTER THAT SHOULD BE DISCUSSED BETWEEN US AND CUBA, HE SAYS, IS REMOVAL OF US SOLDIERS FROM GUANTANAMO. CASTRO VOWS TO PRESS FORWARD IN HELPING GOVERNMENTS OF ETHIOPIA, ANGOLA, AND MOZAMBIQUE, AS WELL AS LIBERATION MOVEMENTS IN NAMIBIA, RHODESIA, AND SOUTH AFRICA. CASTRO SAYS THAT NO MATTER WHAT "IMPERIALISM" DOES IN SOUTHERN AFRICA, "BATTLE
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IS ALREADY LOST". CLAIMING THAT PRESIDENT CARTER HAS BEEN MISLED BY SOME OF HIS ADVISERS INTO MAKING FALSE AND EXAGGERATED STATEMENTS ON CUBAN AFRICAN EFFORTS, CASTRO WARNS THAT IF US PERSISTS WITH "BLACKMAIL" METHODS REPRESENTED BY THESE DECLARATIONS AND US EMBARGO, HE (CASTRO) WILL "FIGHT AGAINST" PRESIDENT CARTER AS HE DID AGAINST PREVIOUS FIVE US PRESIDENTS. MORE EMBARGO WILL BE RECIPROCATED BY TRAINING OF MORE CUBAN SOLDIERS, CASTRO BLUSTERED.

5. ON CUBAN POLITICAL PRISONER ISSUE, RAISED LAST WEEK BY US SENATORS, CASTRO TAKES PREDICTABLE STAND CONDEMNING FORMER CIA TRAINING OF "COUNTERREVOLUTIONARIES", ALLEGED HYPOCRISY OF US POLITICIANS WHO DEFEND CUBAN PRISONERS WHILE OVERLOOKING DISCRIMINATION AGAINST US RACIAL MINORITIES, AND GENERALLY UNJUST NATURE OF US SOCIETY. IN THIS CONTEXT, CASTRO MENTIONS PUERTO RICAN PRISONER LOLITA LEBRON AND OFFERS TO EXCHANGE ALL CUBAN POLITICAL PRISONERS IN CUBA FOR EQUAL NUMBER OF US BLACK CONVICTS.

6. ON AMCIT POLITICAL PRISONERS HERE, CASTRO SAYS THAT "FEW OLD CIA AGENTS" WHICH HE STILL HOLDS WILL REMAIN HERE AS LONG AS NECESSARY SINCE HE HAS ALREADY MADE ALL POSSIBLE GESTURES ON THIS MATTER. (NOTE: THIS REMARK IS FOLLOWED CLOSELY BY STATEMENT THAT EMBARGO EXCLUDES EVEN SHIPMENTS OF MEDICINES AND MEDICAL EQUIPMENT.

THIS MAY REPRESENT SIGNAL THAT CASTRO ASSOCIATES RELEASE OF FOUR
AMCIT POLITICAL PRISONERS WITH US PERMISSION FOR SHIPMENT OF
MEDICINES REQUESTED BY CUBA. CASTRO DOES NOT, HOWEVER, SPECIFICALLY
SPELL OUT THIS TRADE-OFF, AND HE MAY WELL EXPECT CONSIDERABLY MORE.)

7. WITH REGARD TO PUERTO RICO, CASTRO SAYS HE WILL DEFEND CAUSE
OF PUERTO RICAN INDEPENDENCE AS LONG AS THERE IS EVEN ONE PERSON
ON ISLAND WHO IS PARTISAN OF INDEPENDENCE CAUSE. HE DISCLAIMS,
HOWEVER, ANY ENCOURAGEMENT OF PUERTO RICAN POLITICAL VIOLENCE.
CASTRO SAYS THAT HE WILL NEVER NEGOTIATE OVER HIS SUPPORT OF
PUERTO RICAN INDEPENDENCE (A QUESTION OF "PRINCIPLE").

8. TURNING TO COMPENSATION, CASTRO STATES THAT HE IS READY TO ACK-
NOWLEDGE CLAIMS OF US PRIVATE COMPANIES IF US RECOGNIZES CLAIMS
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OWED TO CUBA FOR INVASIONS, SABOTAGE, AND EMBARGO DAMAGE. HE
PLACES THESE DAMAGES AS 4 BILLION (DOLLARS?) WITH INTEREST BRINGING
TOTAL TO 6 BILLION (DOLLARS?). (COMMENT: CASTRO USED 6 BILLION
FIGURE AT RECENT BUSINESS INTERNATIONAL MEETING. WE UNDERSTAND THAT
CUBAN MINISTRIES IN RECENT MONTHS HAVE BEEN TASKED TO ITEMIZE
"DAMAGES" IN DETAILED FASHION.)

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P R 281652Z DEC 77
FM USINT HAVANA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 818
INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 HAVANA 0945

9. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH EMOTIONALISM OF VOLATILE CUBAN LEADER MAY
HAVE CONVEYED MORE SEVERE MESSAGE THAN ORIGINALLY INTENDED (SINCE

SPEECH'S NOVELTY IS TONE, RATHER THAN CONTENT), BASIC POINT REMAINS THAT CASTRO WISHED TO SIGNAL UNBENDING NATURE OF HIS POSITION ON AFRICA, PUERTO RICO, AND CUBAN-NATIONALITY POLITICAL PRISONERS - A SIGNAL THAT WAS PROBABLY FELT DESIRABLE IN THE WAKE OF RECENT WHITE HOUSE, STATE DEPARTMENT, AND CONGRESSIONAL STATEMENTS CRITICAL OF CUBA (SIGNATURE BY LIBERAL SENATORS OF POLITICAL PRISONER RELEASE PETITION MAY HAVE BEEN ESPECIALLY ALARMING). CASTRO'S MESSAGE HAD MULTIPLE ADDRESSEES WHICH, IN ADDITION TO WASHINGTON, INCLUDED, AT MINIMUM, CUBAN PUBLIC AND SOVIETS. FOR FORMER, CASTRO WISHED TO DAMPEN ECONOMIC EXPECTATIONS AROUSED BY US-CUBAN NORMALIZATION PROCESS AND TO FORTIFY SPARTAN ETHOS ASSOCIATED WITH THE 1978 DEVELOPMENT PLAN (INCREASED LABOR PRODUCTIVITY WITH NO INCREASE IN CONSUMPTION) AND EXPANDED CUBAN OVERSEAS ACTIVISM. FOR SOVIETS, CASTRO WISHED TO PROVIDE ASSURANCE THAT CUBA HAS NO THOUGHTS OF UNDERTAKING SADAT/SIAD-TYPE DEVIATION - A REASSURANCE NECESSARY TO OBTAIN ECONOMIC BENEFITS CRITICAL TO CUBAN LONG-TERM ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN. (GRANMA, DECEMBER 27, GIVES PROMINENT COVERAGE TO PRAVDA'S HIGHLY FAVORABLE COMMENTS ON CASTRO'S SPEECH.) CASTRO'S PURPOSES VIS-A-VIS WASHINGTON, MOSCOW, AND THE LOCAL POPULACE WERE SERVED BY POINTING UP UNLIKELIHOOD OF QUICK AND EASY COMPROMISES ON MAJOR ISSUES WITH US. AT THE SAME

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TIME, HOWEVER, CASTRO'S CARE NOT TO CLOSE THE DOOR ON NORMALIZATION WITH THE US SUGGESTS THAT CUBAN LEADER STILL VIEWS ECONOMIC ADVANTAGES OF OPENING TO US AS ATTRACTIVE. HIS STRESS ON EMBARGO REMOVAL AS ACID TEST OF CARTER ADMINISTRATION POLICY IS INDICATIVE OF CONTINUED, ACTIVE CUBAN DESIRE TO OPEN TRADE - A DESIDERATUM FOR WHICH CASTRO MUST REALIZE HE WILL HAVE TO PAY SOME PRICE. WHAT CASTRO DID ON DECEMBER 24 WAS TO EXCLUDE SOME ISSUES ON WHICH PRICE OF COMPROMISE NOW SEEMED TOO HIGH. WHAT REMAINS IN HIS SHORT-TERM CALCULATION OF THE POSSIBLE, IF ANYTHING, MAY BE LIMITED US LIFTING OF EMBARGO IN EXCHANGE FOR LIMITED CUBAN CONCESSIONS - AN IDEA WHICH CASTRO MAY HAVE BEEN SEEKING TO FLOAT IN HIS DECEMBER 24 REMARKS ON US POLITICAL PRISONERS (AND HIS COMMITMENT TO CODEL RICHMOND/NOLAN TO EXAMINE BINATIONAL EMIGRATION LIST). IN THIS REGARD, WE ARE INTRIGUED BY CUBAN REPRINT (GRANMA WEEKLY REVIEW, DECEMBER 5) OF JUNE 1977 CARLOS RAFAEL RODRIGUEZ INTERVIEW (HAVANA A-25 DATED DECEMBER 28,1977) IN WHICH LATTER HAS GUARDED BUT POSITIVE WORDS FOR LIFTING OF EMBARGO ON ONE-WAY SALES OF US FOODS AND MEDICINES FOR CUBA. WHETHER AND HOW, INDEED, CASTRO FORESEES PROGRESS IN NORMALIZATION WITH US IN ABSENCE OF CUBAN MODERATION IN AFRICA MAY BEGIN TO EMERGE DURING CODEL RUESS STAY HERE THIS WEEK. (FYI GOC HAS BEEN EXTREMELY COOPERATIVE AND HAS SHOWN GREAT ANTICIPATION IN PLANNING FOR RUESS VISIT. THERE MAY BE A SIGNAL HERE. END FYI.)

10. AS RECOMMENDED REFTTEL, USINT BELIEVES THAT LOW-KEY USG REACTION TO SPEECH IS BEST POSITION AT THIS TIME.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
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Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
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Subject: CASTRO HITS OUT AT RECENT US STATEMENTS
TAGS: PDIP, MILI, ETRD, XJ, US, CU, (CASTRO RUZ, FIDEL)
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